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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

Identical letters dated 30 March 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, dated 30 March 2012, on the nineteenth round of the Geneva international discussions (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Alexander **Lomaia**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 30 March 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the nineteenth round of the Geneva international discussions

The nineteenth round of the Geneva international discussions was held on 29 March 2012. The participants in the Geneva discussions took part in an individual capacity in the two working groups, one focusing on security and stability in Georgia's occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia and the other on the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their original residence. The discussions are co-moderated by representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and attended by participants from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. The Head of the Provisional Administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District and the Chair of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, as well as representatives of the proxy regimes from Tskhinvali and Sokhumi, took part in the nineteenth round of the Geneva discussions.

The principal goal of the first working group of the Geneva discussions remains to reach agreement on the non-use of force and the international security arrangements. The necessity of undertaking the commitment not to use force against Georgia and the full implementation of all provisions of the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement from the Russian side is especially important in the context of Russia's plan to hold a large-scale military exercise "Caucasus 2012" in September and the rising aggressive rhetoric from Russian officials. Such commitment from the Russian side, reciprocating the unilateral pledge made by Tbilisi in November 2010, would alleviate the existing security concerns and constitute a significant step towards stability on the ground. The discussions held during the nineteenth round demonstrated that this process has a potential of moving in the right direction and the pledge on the non-use of force from Moscow could materialize in the foreseeable future.

It is noteworthy that the Russian side responded to the concerns raised by the Georgian participants on the military drill "Caucasus 2012" with the assurance that the training would be command-and-staff drill and would not include Russian troops deployed outside of the territory of Russia. The Georgian side will wait for this statement to be officially confirmed by the relevant authorities of the Russian Federation and be substantiated by the actual facts on the ground before making further official assessments.

It remains the declared goal of the Georgian side to ensure that the Russian Federation fully implements the 12 August ceasefire agreement and withdraws its troops to the places held before the outbreak of the hostilities. The Georgian side once again offered a number of interim measures before the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement takes place and the full-fledged international security regime, consisting, inter alia, of the international peacekeeping/police missions, is established in the occupied regions. The Co-Chairs of the Geneva discussions, as

well as the representatives of the United States, also share the position that the best guarantee of the non-resumption of hostilities and security and stability on the ground is the establishment of solid international security arrangements.

Participants also discussed the issues pertaining to the work of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms, which are dealing with the whole spectrum of issues related to the security environment on the ground. However, full utilization of the potential of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms and the instruments available to the Mechanisms still remains to be achieved.

During the nineteenth round of the Geneva discussions, as in previous rounds, no progress was registered on the fundamental questions issues within the second working group, which deals with the return of the internally displaced persons and refugees and humanitarian issues. Moscow and its proxy regimes still refuse to discuss the safe, dignified and voluntary return of the internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their original residence and fail to recognize the fundamental rights of internally displaced persons and refugees.

Within the second working group, the Georgian side raised the issue of protection of cultural heritage within the occupied regions of Georgia. During the information session, held on 28 March, the legal tools for the protection of cultural heritage were presented to the participants of the Geneva discussions, leading to an interesting exchange of views on the subject. The Georgian side maintains that the best way to ensure the protection of the sites of cultural heritage is to proceed in a non-politicized humanitarian way, with the involvement of neutral international organizations in the oversight of these important monuments of historical importance.

The twentieth round of the Geneva international discussions will take place on 8 June 2012.

Tbilisi, 30 March 2012